(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether suggestions have also been invited to make changes in the existing export-import poilcy of the country;

(d) whether any suggestions have been received so far;

(e) whether Government propose to take action on these suggestions; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) A number of steps were taken in the revised Export and Import Policy on 30th March, 1994 to simplify the policy and procedures. Other steps taken to gear up the export machinery include, inter. alia, green channel facility for exporters, facilitating export linked imports through Duty Exemption and EPCG Schemes, designating Nodal officers responsible for export promotion in various Departments, close interaction ith Apex Bodies, Chambers, associations and other exporting community besides activating the OGFT Organisation as export faciliator.

(c) to (f) Suggestions have been received from various cuarters which are under review. All suggestions towards Policy/ procedural simplifications will be taken into account while framing the revised Exim Policy Procedure.

U.S. proposal to boost trade ties with India

878. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that U.S.A. proposes to boost trade ties with India, and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) India has been identified as one of the Big Emerging Markets by USA. In January' 1995, Mr. Ronald H. Brown, US Commerce Secretary visited India on a Presidential Business Deveopment Mission alongwith Chief Executive Officers of a number of large US Companies. An MOU for setting up of Indo-US Commercial Alliance has also been signed. These efforts are expected to lead to stronger trade and commercial ties.

Hampering of Swiss Investment due to High tariffs

879. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem in 'The Statesman', dated 7th February, 1995 captioned "High tariffs hampering Swiss investment in India".

(b) if so, whether the President of the Swiss Federation of Commerce and Industry have pointed out several discrepancies and hurdles in the way of implementing Indo-Swiss trade agreements;

(c) if so, whether Government have taken any serious efforts to boost Indo-Swiss agreements; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It has been reported in the Press that the President of the Swiss Feredation for Commerce and Industry touched upon certain difficulties in the export from Switzerland of textiles, watches and some items of food processing industries on account of India's import policy and high tariffs.

(c) and (d) It is Government's constant endavour to expand bilateral economic ties with all its partners including Switzerland. Government has been effecting a gradual reduction in tariffs. Trade Policy changes are part of an on-going exercise.

Steps to boost export of tea

880. SHRI KRISHAN KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to take serious steps to boost export of tea in order to save the Tea Industry from collapse;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there has been step fall in export of tea during the last years: and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (d) Exports of India tea have shown a declining trend during the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and the current financial year. Reasons for lower quantum of exports are attributable to lower imports by Russia and other CIS countries on account of their internal economic problems: lower imports of tea by Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and competition from other producing countries.

In order to step up exports of Indian tea to Russia, an agreement has been signed with Russian Government which inter-alia provides for import of tea under the debt repayment mechanism. A suitable module has been approved by the Government for promotional strategies to be undertaken in Russia and and other CIS countries by the Tea Board in consultation with the tea industry. Iranian authorities have also been requested to facilitate opening of LCs for exports of Indian tea in respect of contracts signed by Indian exporters with Iranian buying agency. Other steps taken to boost exports of tea include promotional campaigns through Tea Board's offices abroad. It consists of (i) participation in trade fairs/exhibitions; (ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness towards various unique characteristics of Indian tea (iii) media campaign to popularise Indian tea through Tea Board Marketing symbol and (iv) support to various foreign brands containing Indian tea. A part of the expenditure incurred by importers for promotional campaigns is met from Tea Board Budget. Tea Board has also undertaken Darjeeling and Assam Logo campaign in UK and sponsored brand promotion schemes to popularise classic Indian teas.

Import of Plastic Garbage

881. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has been increasingly importing cheap and reprocessable plastic garbage,

(b) if so, what is the percentage rise in the imports of cheap and reprocessable plastic garbage during the last three years (year-wise);

(c) whether Government have made any study of the hazards associated with the recycling of plastic waste;

(d) if so, what are the details therof; and

(e) what is the comparative position in racyling of plastic waste in relation to the Western countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) Under the current Export and Import Policy, import of all types of plastic waste (except PET bottle waste) is restricted for import. This restriction has been imposed with effect from 31-3-1994 on account of factors including hazards associated with the recycling of plastic waste and after careful consideration of various issues invoved. Therefore, the possibility of increase in imports of plastic waste does not arise.

Export of granite

882. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total export of granite from India, during the years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95; and

(c) what is the break of the total export in terms of raw granite and polished granite?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The break up of exports of granite are as given below: